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November 10, 2022

Mr. Michael T. Kilmer  
Director, Veterans Affairs Eastern Colorado Health Care  
Rocky Mountain Regional VA Medical Center  
1700 N Wheeling Street  
Aurora, CO 80045

Dear Mr. Kilmer,

I am concerned by reports that the Veterans Affairs East Colorado Health Care System appears to be increasingly incorporating the most divisive principles of the Diversity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee within the VA Colorado health care system. Given rising demand for improved veterans' care in Colorado and across the country, it is troubling to hear that politicized and unnecessary rhetoric is increasingly distracting and dividing healthcare providers.

My office has become aware of numerous instances of divisive rhetoric being propagated by the DEI Committee. Late last year a committee member emailed a large group of staff stating that they should look for ways to "dismantle systems" within the VA that activists may consider as maintaining or perpetuating "systemic racism." Around the same time, the VA Race-Based Stress and Trauma Resiliency group was established and began actively recruiting participants, but specifically excluded white veterans. Additionally, it is my understanding that the DEI Committee sent out results of a survey that a committee member openly stated were manipulated to justify implementing desired objectives. The implicit bias of these groups and the prejudiced messages they are promoting is troubling.

One of the more concerning issues that has been brought to my attention is another email sent out by a member of the DEI Committee to multiple employees encouraging them to take part in "Racial Caucuses." These caucuses allege to "discuss oppression, privilege, and engage in anti-racism activism... done in separate racial groups... because different groups have different work that needs to be done. For example, the email continues, "white individuals need to educate themselves on their role in racism whereas people of color need dedicate space to connect and process negative racialized experiences." For white participants in this group, a litany of sessions on "white identity, privilege, and internalized racial superiority" awaits, including:

- October 10<sup>th</sup> – "But studies show" discussing how race may be misinterpreted in medical studies
- December 12<sup>th</sup> – "White Superiority in Recruitment and Bias of Professionalism" discussing how workplace practices "privilege the values of white and Western employees and leave behind people of color"

- February 13<sup>th</sup> – “Hidden Curriculum” discussing “unconscious behaviors and curricular examples” that can “undermine” institutions promoting cultural humility
- April 10<sup>th</sup> – “Shame & Accountability” discussing how responding to being called out can “strengthen or silence voices of people of color”

VA healthcare providers and employees under your charge serve to provide our nation’s heroes with the best medical care possible. The notion that being a political activist in a federal agency is permissible, and even encouraged, inevitably undermines this mission. Promoting groups and dialogue that villainize portions of your staff only serves to divide a workforce that should be unified with one essential goal: providing quality healthcare to Colorado’s veterans.

I appreciate your timely response and within 30 days of receipt of this letter. Thank you for your attention to this serious matter.

Sincerely,



Doug Lamborn  
Member of Congress

cc. The Honorable Dennis McDonough, Secretary of Veterans Affairs